



Herald Photo/Jennifer Grigg

Northridge Elementary School third-graders Tyler Rodgers, left, and Ashley King use footbridge spanning Murdock Canal in Orem.

## Parents' concerns mandate footbridge fencing

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OREM — City officials have decided not to gamble with child safety along a portion of the Murdock Canal and will begin install-

The portion of canal in question is just east of the Northridge Park which is adjacent to Northridge Elementary School.

Manning said fencing is missing on the east side going north

dren to walk along while holding onto the bridge.

In addition, the city recently completed installing playground equipment which makes the park a bigger draw to children who

the bridge." Conrad said nothing will work to keep all children away from the canal, but fencing would keep the littlest ones out.

Until the fencing is completed, Conrad said neighborhood moth-

Two weeks ago neighbors of the Northridge Park expressed concerns about the lack of fencing along the canal next to a new footbridge connecting homes to the east with the park.

Last week, neighborhood representatives returned and got the answer they were looking for — Orem city will install the fencing as soon as possible.

“From a purely liability standpoint, it’s not that bad. But it goes beyond that because everyone is a parent and no one wants to see children get hurt,” said newly named public works director Richard Manning.

When the city created Northridge Park, the entire package included the installation of a footbridge to accommodate homes to the east.

One of the concerned mothers in the area said the bridge is needed, but other factors combined with completion of the bridge to make the area particularly dangerous.

Judy Conrad, 98 E. 1750 North, said approximately two weeks ago a storm drain pipe was installed next to the footbridge which is wide enough for chil-

with water. filled the canal sooner than expected with the unusually wet weather.

“A number of things came together at the same time. The bridge was actually a blessing in disguise because it got people down here to look at it,” Conrad added.

A recent count of people using the footbridge showed 219 children crossed between approximately 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. on a Thursday, Conrad said.

A neighbor to the east of canal told Conrad she constantly sees children “on, around and under

the Northridge Elementary is beginning and ending the school day.

City engineer Ed Gifford said crews will complete fencing on each side of the bridge. The west side of the bridge, which has a significant slope to street level, will also get retaining walls and ramps to accommodate disabled individuals.

The canal company is very concerned that they have easy access to the canal when it is filled with water, Gifford said. To alleviate those concerns, the city will also be installing automatic gates which will open by a sensor.

to start cutbacks as client population decreased, and operational efficiencies.” She said the noteworthy outcome is that USDC will enter FY 1994 with funds available for much-needed enhancement of residential building interiors, furniture, carpeting, etc. Although her new job begins June 1, Wilkinson will return as a consultant periodically as the institution works to gain national accreditation. “We are hopeful we can gain accreditation this year. We’ve had three successful surveys in the last three years.” Beginning next year, Alpine School District will no longer be conducting school at the institution for educable clients. The clients will not be bused to schools in the community. Wilkinson pointed out that there are four and a half empty buildings that have been maintained and could be used by other agencies.

Whereas the State Hospital can treat some patients with drugs to control mental illness, the Developmental Center can treat with drugs only if mental illness is definitely diagnosed. Wilkinson worked for a short time at the institution after completing her master’s degree at the University of Utah. “When I left in 1971, many of the clients were still in beds. When I returned, I couldn’t believe the difference. We no longer ware-house people; those days are long gone. Federal mandates require active treatment for clients, physically, emotionally and emotionally. She commented that “a lot of people knock federal regulations and legislation, but positive things have come out of it.” She is proud of the fiscal achievements as well. The institution has gone from a December

more than just an institution or group home. Some individuals may receive respite or short-term care. Some people need additional help to keep the disabled person at home; some need assisted language devices or wheelchairs. Others need help only so they can go on vacation for a short time. “Often, you only hear about group homes,” she said. Wilkinson said the Developmental Center is not going to increase in size. “For an institution to build back up would cause a great deal of litigation, because it would be against the national trend for protection of client rights.” “I don’t think it will close simply because Utah is taking a different direction than most other states,” she said. Another reason is that Utah has only single institutions for the mentally ill and retarded. “Some of the more difficult cas-

The other group feels more secure having their family members in the institution where they receive a higher level of nursing and professional services. “They feel their loved ones are in a stable situation where they can



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